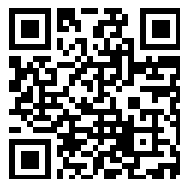

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CHARLIE CHAPLIN

I

PRELUDE

TO the creative artist of the cinema, the mask of Charlie Chaplin has just the same importance as the traditional mask of Beethoven has to the musical composer.

I hope that this pronouncement will automatically eliminate all superfluous readers, and that we shall only be concerned with people who are capable of understanding each other.

That sets our minds at rest. And we can go on.

II

THE MASK

THERE has been a lot of talk about this mask of Charlie Chaplin.

Some have been pleased to find there a family resemblance to the finest heads of the Japanese stylists; others prefer to recall for it some of the magnificently learned expressions of Velasquez, some bold bare faces of Albert Dürer, or something of the precise outline of the Flemish primitives. And, in intention at least, this is not absurd: at bottom it is right. For what does strike us in the latest presentations of this mask is how clearly it has taken on the quality of a painter's work. A living pictorial art! We have come very near to realising that. Already there is one portrait in the gallery.

The mask of Charlie Chaplin, this Anglo-American mime, is curiously Latin. I myself do not see in it that profound dryness, that sour reserve, or that composed disorder which one traces in the old masters

of the north and east of France. There is, in this delicate face, an enamoured melancholy which shows up strongly on the screen; it finds its expression and achievement by the means which belong to the Île de France itself, the source of the pure French tradition. If Chaplin is the work of some old-time painter, he must be from the brush of one of those portrait painters whose slender conceptions illuminate the small rooms of the Louvre: Henry III, Francis I, and what besides? From Jean de Paris down to Clouet, these faces come in procession, shaven and subtle, ironic, sentimentally sensual, acute and unheeding; there is wit gnawing at their muscles, easing the treacherous tightness of the nerves, and in their eyes flits an unfathomed life.

Is Charlie then something born of the court of France? Is he finding again, reaching across four or five centuries, a mastery of the Latin style? Or is he simply carrying within him some kind of atavistic essence of that ancestry which some have attributed to him? It has been alleged that this little Englishman of Los Angeles was nearly born at Paris, of an Anglo-Saxon father and a Spanish mother. But the reasoning hardly counts. The fact remains that, with all his formulas of Cockney pantomime,

he gives us sometimes the charm, almost retrospective and classic, of the early French painters.

But what's the good of seeking an author for this portrait? Charlie has nothing to do with Bourget's story : he is not the man " who has lost his painter." He is his own painter, his very own. For Charlie is the artist and the work of art at one and the same time, and he has accomplished something which (shades of the dandies, forgive me !) is possible only in the cinema : to paint and model and sculp one's *own* body, one's *own* features, to make a transposition of art.

Charlie is a painter in the way that Villon was a poet. He is really *himself*, and showing himself in the form which suits him best, that is, the photographic form. And that is why, in this art of the *living* picture, this man is the first full-fledged creator. And so far he remains the only one.

III

THE PIONEER

THE case of Charlie Chaplin calls up that of Molière. But Molière became mighty tedious in his latter-day royal productions, and one feels that Charlie Chaplin, with his dizzying evolutions, will never be tedious.

At most, we must wait until he does something tragic.

The choregraphy of our time has brought out talents such as those of Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Tortola Valencia, Anna Pavlova, Leonide Massine. Decorative art owes them much. But one name dominates them all: that of Nijinski. He was in the full sense of the word a creator. He invented. His plastic imagination was suffused with a pureness of quality, which (if I were a poet) I should like to qualify as satanic. He has passed like a refreshing wave.

Charlie Chaplin is an inventor in his art as Nijinski

in his. But remember that plastic expression is as old as the world. There are stages in its history through the centuries, and each has its own distinguishing figure. Nijinski, the representative figure of our epoch, stands for only one epoch of the dance in all the history of the dance. But Charlie is the pioneer of the very first epoch of his art, and he is in some measure responsible for the plaything having become an art. These early days of the cinema have brought some distinguished interpreters—Hart, Fairbanks, Hayakawa, Marie Doro, Mae Marsh, Lilian Gish, Sjostrom, and five or six more. But of them all only one is anything more than an interpreter. Chaplin interprets himself. And he sums up, not what is being done, like Nijinski, but what is going to be done.

I think of Nijinski when I think of Chaplin.

Nijinski gathers up into his brain ten thousand passions. He is filled to overflowing with reflection and with love. He is so much the spring and source of all the tentative streams of his art that he is left solitary. He creates—with frenzy. The flame of creation consumes him. He will die. They say he is mad now. Hail and farewell!

And I think of Chaplin now.



CHARLIE CHAPLIN AND JACKIE COOGAN IN "THE KID."



CHARLIE CHAPLIN WITH THE VICOMTE DE FÉNELON.

A living proof of the well-known axiom that the French are gay and the English are impassive

I stand amazed at the immense sadness of Chaplin.

This man will be lucky if he doesn't die in a mad-house. A creative artist as sombre as he would find relief in poems, in novels, in music. Chaplin's sadness impels him to movement, and the laughing spectator finds an astonishing sense of balance. But—for the interpreter there is all the stuff of madness.

You know his violinist part? He drives the gipsies to tears. He brings poetry back to its own. He is discreetly hopeless. How sad he is!

And then he's a burglar! And then on a journey! And at the pawnbroker's! But he's sad, he's sad.

And then there is "A Dog's Life," a travesty woven of grief. There he's down and out, and he gulps down the flavour of the dancing-hall, the band, the singer wailing her turn. He is hungry, hungry with all his being. He will never be able to eat again. Like Sully-Prudhomme when he entered the French Academy, he exclaims, "Too late!" But Chaplin's grief makes one laugh, and not weep as one does at Monsieur Prudhomme's, for he is a man, is Charlie, and has the sorrows of a man.

People said at first that "Shoulder Arms" was in bad taste; and then afterwards they were vastly

amused. But really it is not amusing, not a bit. The war through Chaplin's eyes . . . An hour of laughter, if you like—but say rather, an hour of lashes, one after the other. During the war they used to read at Paris a cheerful sheet called *Le Canard Enchaîné*—and how funny that was in all conscience! For the sight of intelligent men wringing their hands to keep themselves from wringing someone else's neck—what is funnier than that?

When dogs are wretched they bay at the moon. That war film of Chaplin bays most terribly at the moon.

IV

THE MAN

CHARLIE CHAPLIN'S life story is a funny film. You remember those film farces which were just endless chases? They had to be very short, but stuffed far more full of happenings than the most full-blooded serial story.

Chaplin's life is short, and as full as three dozen well-fashioned melodramas. And it has a pungent flavour to it.

Charles Spencer Chaplin was born in London in the spring of 1889, the son of a singer and a dancer. His father died. His mother danced. And in this paradoxical family there were illnesses and poverty and days of real hunger—a family like any number in Whitechapel and Limehouse, and like that of Charles Dickens in particular.

His mother, the dancer, they say, had a pretty miming talent. No doubt that's why she was forced to make her living as a home dressmaker, and why

she taught Charlie and his elder brother Sydney the art of dressmaking at the age of five or six years. And probably she taught them also, by her little secrets or by her example, what she knew of the science of silence.

The two kiddies soon began to feel their way to the stage. Charlie was hardly ten when he tried his parts at a music-hall. In "Sunnyside," one of his best films, you can see him dancing and tumbling with the perfect grace of a girl performer. His first appearances were in the troupe known as "The Lancashire Lads," in clog-dancing turns. Well, you have luck on your side or against you. And what is to be thought of the painful start of a boy of eight who has to help out matters, when they're bad enough already, with—a lumping pair of clogs?

But a day came when Charlie got his full-sized part. By one of those strokes of luck which help to give theatrical managers the reputation of having a *flair*, he was given the part of Billy, Sherlock Holmes's lad—you remember, a crafty, mysterious young rascal who understands his master's gifts so thoroughly, and loves him with a sort of critical sentimentality in the very best tradition.

But the best part of his business, and indeed of

his own self, Charlie learned in London, in Karno's famous, almost classical, pantomime troupe. In Karno's shows all the traditions of stage humour are preserved. Acrobatics and skits, with tragic laughter and purging melancholy, sketches and dances and juggling—all are there, soberly blended, the authoritative version of the unrivalled English "comic." Its repertory is really as limited as that of tragedy. The dramatic poets go working away on Agamemnon and Electra and their cousins for three thousand years on end. And English pantomime—in the Karno troupes above all—works away perpetually on the themes of their imagery—bicycle thieves, billiard players, drunks coming home, boxing lessons, behind the scenes of a music-hall, the singer who gets ready to sing but never does, the conjurer whose tricks never come off, and so on.

These farcical little tales are not funny, as one ingenuously thinks, merely on account of the impassivity of the players or the knock-about business and the custard-pies. There are clowns in all countries who do the same thing, as in the Spanish and Italian circuses. This English comic show has an incredible rhythm about it, and its strength is synthetic, the strength of the skilful blend. Every

ingredient is carefully measured out, put together, and concentrated. Every blow gets home as surely as if the fist of a first-rate boxer were behind it. Every effect bursts on you like a gun going off. Is there sometimes an impression of disorder in the blend? But you get that impression when you look at a multiplication sum with all its countless figures. There are none of the rough joins of a Lyons puppet play, none of the atmosphere of the *café-concert*, nothing of the clear tender lines of the Latin arabesques or the flourishes which the pantomime of the Mediterranean did not get rid of with Debureau, Rouffe, Thalès, Séverin. This mimed comedy of England is a roughly fashioned synthesis, and it is irresistible.

There could have been no better school for such a personality as Chaplin's. He was seventeen when he started with Karno, taking small parts, working desperately hard. He went with the troupe to America, came back with them to London, back to New York, and again returned to England, and for four or five years he worked at getting the feel of this repertory with its neat and suggestive technique. It was to come in useful for him later, on the cinema, as you can see in "Charlie at the Show," which

has a close likeness to the pantomime, "A Night at a Music-Hall," in which he played with success. And that famous screen-monologue, "One A.M.," is modelled on a mimed comedy on the same theme, where Fred Karno (I think it was) played the "screwed" gentleman, and where the furniture and rugs and various properties were "interpreted" by the actors. (It was thus that the bearskin—a capital buffoonery—was "played" two years before Chaplin by Max Dearly, who derived some of his quality as a *fantaisiste* from the Karno school.)

Thanks to Chaplin, English comedy conquered the American cinema. The comic American films were made up—and there are still lots of them—of very stupid knock-about, but they got their laugh all the same. When the Keystone Company engaged the young English mime, seven or eight years ago at most, his first appearance gave the management a shock. He had not quite been able to fall in with the accepted scenic code of the establishment. He already knew the value of expression, and he had learned from Fred Karno that, fling your limbs in no matter how joyous a frenzy, it comes to nothing unless you can get the movements—or the lack of movements—of the mask.

And the get-up of left-off clothes which he designed for himself seemed rather banal. His colleagues went to no end of pains in contriving eccentricities of costumes and wigs and make-up. But Chaplin stuck to this one that had been seen before, a little simplified, in the main stylistic. After proposing to cancel his contract, the Keystone Company's directors got hold of the fact that Chaplin was not an ordinary marionette, but a comedian, an interpreter, an artist. They got hold of it so firmly that they made efforts to transform into "artists" the excited little mummers of their company and to deck out these partners of Chaplin with a sort of parodied charm in a corresponding key.

From that moment dates this fortunate development of the American comic film. The Keystone Company made its fortune. Chaplin's partners found the realisation of their own personality, and since then we have seen them in a new light. Roscoe Arbuckle ("Fatty") has become the fascinating ringleader of splendidly far-fetched gangs; Mabel, who used to be an insignificant little thing, is the Mabel Normand of Mickey and Joan of Plattsburg; Mack Swain (Ambrose) has widened his too narrow humour in the recent Chaplin pictures.

The producer who had brought Charlie into the Los Angeles studios was Mack Sennett. Easy enough to please in his earlier days, as the first arrived producer, he is to-day a real creator of films. Mickey has put the seal on his gifts, as also have those crazy bathing-girl comedies with their rhythm that reminds you now of Offenbach, and now of Stravinski. What is more, whether he knows it or not, Sennett has pointed the way towards what is going one day to be an important development of the art—the nude on the screen.

In 1915 the mad little Keystone films were celebrated—through the personality of Charlie Chaplin. These productions spread their power over the whole world. A few months had been enough to make Chaplin, under his varying names, Charlie, Carlitto, or Charlot, what he still is—the most famous man in the world. Until a new order of things arises, he eclipses the fame of Joan of Arc, Louis XIV, and Clemenceau. I can think of only Napoleon rivalling his notoriety. A passing blaze of glory, no doubt; but is it not strange that it was kindled so quickly and dazzlingly?

The golden ball was at Charlie's feet. He nego-

tiated with the Essanay Company, and made his debut in their Chicago studios with "Charlie at Work," at a salary of \$250 a week. He came back, still for the Essanay, to San Francisco, where "Charlie's Night Out," "Champion Charlie," "Police," and other films were made. And everyone has seen that delightful Essanay series in which Charlie was able to draw studies so varied as "Charlie the Tramp," "Charlie the Perfect Lady," and especially "Shanghaied," "Charlie's Elopement," and "Charlie at the Show."

In these he worked with an excellent partner, Edna Purviance, who has since played with him in all his films. The pretty blonde, at first only a partner, became as it were a living experiment for Chaplin; for he modelled the mask, gave it strength and style, and yet did not break its natural charm. Along with them was also Ben Turpin, a good acrobat who turned himself into a good comedian.

Between-whiles, Chaplin tried to bring into being a real dramatic film. This was to be expected, for he has in him that sort of French grace which gives him kinship with the drama of sentiment. He is own cousin of D'Artagnan. His film tragedy,

however, seems to have no relationship with the elder Dumas. But probably we shall never see this work, for after a few weeks of work on it he had to break off, obliged by his Essanay contract to complete his comic series.

Better so. He was not mature enough to stand the test of abandoning himself to tears. But in the films which he composed afterwards he mingles with the farce a few short moments of emotion which are worth a whole drama. In his "Carmen" he ends up the travesty with an expression of anguish and despair which, unhappily, we have never seen in any interpreter of Don José.

When the Essanay engagement came to an end, Chaplin, now a conquering hero, had a few weeks' amusement in letting himself be fêted, listened to the eulogies of the interested, and abruptly signed with the Mutual Film Corporation that sensational contract which gave him the reputation of a man earning a million a year. As a matter of fact, the contract covered only one year and ran to hardly more than half a million, in consideration of which Chaplin had to provide twelve films, and however little one knows about the practical necessities of

the cinema and the meticulous style of Chaplin's work, one must grant that the delivery of twelve good films in twelve months is a paradoxical demand. Chaplin almost pulled it off, and devoted himself for just over the year to the creation of that dazzling sequence of pictures, satiric and tender, stinging and ardent, in which one must name, remember, and wonder at each and every one.

"The Floor-walker," "The Fireman," "The Vagabond," "One A.M.," "The Pawn-shop," "Behind the Screen," "The Rink," "Easy Street," "The Cure," "The Immigrant," and "The Adventurer"—these form the year's work.

These films mark a decided opening out of Chaplin's genius, and show technical progress too in the stage management. But at the same time they achieve something which Chaplin, *the English mime*, has insistently demanded—the abolition of the custard-pie, of blow for blow, of rough-and-tumble which has no bearing on the story. At last the persons on the screen are not simply types brought out for such-and-such a film, but make up an *ensemble* of their own, with characters of their own, like the Italian comedy of the seventeenth century or the British pantomime of the nineteenth. It is quite

probable that if, in contradiction to the theatre, the cinema did not disown every day what it gave birth to the day before, it would have created for its service a most remarkable repertory of buffoon types and visual parodies. But these experiments were caught up in the devouring whirlpool of Chaplin—who would not be Chaplin if he were content to paw away at the same piece of ground.

Chaplin's fortune grew after the Mutual series. In 1918 he contracted with the First National Exhibitors Association for a series of eight films for a total of one million dollars. And from these favourable conditions, which assured him moral and material independence, Chaplin profited by being able to give out more of his own personality, to have his invention unfettered, yet to be strict with himself—in fact to be more of *himself*.

"A Dog's Life," "Shoulder Arms," "Sunnyside," and "A Day's Pleasure" have already given the proof everywhere of the *éclat* of this great and sorely vexed talent. Another production, "The Kid," brought into being alongside of the First National series, has made the proof even more complete.

The story of this small dark man, smiling, curly-

haired, is as straightforward as his nice clear eyes. He is protean, but surrounding all his varieties there is a continuous moral care. This only just concerns our purpose.

An interviewer could not tell you much. Chaplin, he might add, is a millionaire, untamed but quite peaceable. He lives in a pleasant Californian villa, and writes from morning to night when he is not making pictures. He makes pictures from morning to night when he is not writing. He's a nice easy-going little fellow, with his head always simmering.

Amongst his friends he is gay, with an actor's gaiety. Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford are among his intimates. He reads all sorts of books. He plays the violin. He strums on the piano. He likes using a dictaphone. But after all, it is the camera that is his best instrument—and his ruling passion.

He has others. He has one for children, for example. One does not see many youngsters in his pictures, but he studies them constantly all the same. Perhaps he is too fond of them to dissect them in photographs. And the children adore him. I don't mean only the public of the whole world,

but the young scamps about Hollywood and Los Angeles. He's had some fine days with them.

As all true poets find, passions have ended for Charlie in mistakes. Charlie, the hopeless comic, had a baby; it died after a few months. Charlie cried. That's no concern of ours.

He fell in love with Mildred Harris, pretty and headstrong, and married her. In one brief day little Mildred Harris became Mildred Harris Chaplin—a star. That was so much to the good. But they are divorced now! She said he starved her and got drunk and hit hard. Charlie said nothing. He got thin. And there he was alone again.

He wouldn't be Charlie if he weren't alone. Poor man!

V

THE METHOD

HOW does Chaplin work?

There are a thousand and one legends in currency which we shall not succeed in exploding. One of them will attribute to him the mentality of a fifth-rate mountebank. Another will proclaim him a little king, and an epitome of every kind of insolence. According to others he throws millions about with all his might, bullies his womenfolk and staff, a tyrannical and absurd personage, a silly ass, a sensationalist, or posing as a sort of philosopher of silent art. Father Didon, the great preacher, used to remain kneeling for hours on end in the middle of a great park, and Gabriele D'Annunzio will gaze upon the sea for a whole day. But Charlie Chaplin just goes on working away.

The first to describe his toil was Max Linder, who is said to have been Charlie's inspiration and



THE RINK.



THE VAGABOND



CHARLIE'S NEW JOB



✓
CHARLIE'S NEW JOB.

model—and certainly Linder is a laughable player—and is now a disciple in America. I quote these pages which he contributed to *Le Film* in 1919, after his first stay in California.

“When you see a Chaplin film,” says Linder, “it is easy to realise that there is a great deal of work in it. Nevertheless, however well informed you may be, it is impossible to get any idea of the continuous and highly intelligent effort of Charlie Chaplin in his work. He calls me his teacher, but, for my part, I have been lucky to get lessons at his school. There are many stupid stories about Chaplin: in the first place he is English, and not French or Spanish as has been said. It was I who first told him that in France he was called Charlot and his brother Sydney, Julot. They were greatly amused and went about calling each other those names all day and bursting into laughter. Charlie has been a performer from his earliest days, and he was quite a remarkable musician and composer.

“Chaplin has built his own theatre at Los Angeles, where he makes his pictures himself, with the collaboration of his brother and a dozen assistants for the stage setting. He works for the

c

camera with the minutest care. The theatre, of course, is equipped with all the most modern improvements and apparatus, but the secret is not in the mechanical work. It is in the method. Charlie, like the true humorist he is, has studied laughter with care, and knows how to provoke it with the rarest precision. He leaves nothing to the chance of improvisation. He goes over and over scenes until he is satisfied. He 'shoots' every single rehearsal and has them thrown on the screen several times, so that he may find just the flaw which spoils the effect he is striving after. He keeps on starting again until he is content, and he is far harder to please than his most harshly critical spectator.

"Seeing Charlie at work, I realise more clearly than ever how little count should be taken of the amount of negative that is used in making a picture. Over here we count up the number of feet as if it had some connection with the finished article. But in reality the only thing that has any connection with the quality of the film is the care taken in producing the picture. To give exact figures on this point, Chaplin spent two months in making a picture of 1,800 feet; he used for that more than 36,000 feet of negative; every scene was 'shot'

twenty times; and with trials, and alterations and finishing touches, that meant about fifty rehearsals.

"It has doubtless been noticed that Charlie never speaks and that his films have very few captions. I need not expound his qualities as an actor, for it is enough to see a film to admire and like them. What is less appreciated is the happy inspiration of his *mise-en-scène*, which he carries out himself. As a producer, he is deliberate and richly gifted; he knows how to construct and work up his film so as to bring out his qualities into sharp relief and to emphasise them by all the external action. His powers of observation have been mentioned, and to express the variety of feelings it is not enough to be merely an actor. There must also be a *mise-en-scène* which will draw out and bring into play the gifts of the interpreter. And Charlie Chaplin knows to a wonderful nicety how to make use of himself, and of his partners, so as to touch just the required note.

"The desired expression comes precisely at the instant when it is needed for the effect. From first to last, spectators of every race and of every type of mind follow the evolution of his thought, and in the very finest touches of his wit. Look at 'One A.M.' Has not Charlie won his wager that

he would keep the crowd laughing at the screen for a full half-hour? For that it is essential that he can be easily followed in his chosen theme, and, without wishing to take away any credit from his valuable fellow-players, it can truly be said that Charlie owes the lion's share of his success to himself as actor and as manager. From the day when he became his own manager, his films have been on a higher plane of achievement.

“Chaplin works with a persevering obstinacy that must be unrivalled. This man in his thirties has already grey hairs about his temples.

“In spite of his fame and his millions, he remains very unaffected, very good-hearted, and a very good friend. With the other luminaries of his profession he is on the best of terms, and is a particularly close friend of Douglas Fairbanks, himself also a charming fellow, and with Mary Pickford, a delightful companion. Chaplin is very gay, one might almost say boyishly so. He is always wide-awake, and, wearing his heart on his sleeve, is extremely charitable, always ready to lend a helping hand to all the good works that ask his help.

“He allows hardly anyone to enter his theatre when work is going on. Jealous of his achievement, he is annoyed and rather distressed to find

that, instead of seeking to create for themselves, other comic actors—American for the most part—only try to make an inferior imitation of himself, and use the slimmest of tricks to get at the secrets of his work. He was good enough to admit me to see him at work, and I can honestly say that he has no secrets. He is methodical to an unheard-of degree, and he has gifts that no imitation can touch. He has no dodges, no private inventions, but he is very intelligent, very systematic, very conscientious. One can understand why he is anxious to remain undisturbed while pictures are being made and to avoid the tiresome imitator. He was very displeased to hear that certain plagiarists in Paris were making use of his name, and had the intention of prosecuting them, but I advised him not to pay them such a tribute. He intends to come to France when he is able, for he cherishes a great affection for France, and during the war lent his aid, in the most disinterested fashion, to Allied propaganda and later to American patriotic purposes. In this latter connection he made a great tour on behalf of the Liberty Loan, and, as was to be expected from his popularity in the States, with the most impressive results. When this was concluded he returned to studio work, and we can

confidently await his latest films as worthy successors to the unforgettable Mutual series.

“I have noticed certain writers speaking rather scornfully of Charlie, as if the power of making one's fellows laugh by perfectly proper means and real psychological study deserved contempt. As for those who don't find him funny, I don't know if they have seen him, and in any case they certainly form only a minute proportion among his spectators. Those who do not care for him do not know him properly, or confound him with some of his weakly imitators. Can there really be any doubt of the pains that must be taken to make men laugh, and is it not particularly unfair to throw scorn on us because we seek to give a moment's distraction to the vast public of the cinema? For laughter is one of man's greatest possessions, indispensable to moral health and balance.

“And what nonsense to say that Charlie and others are laughter-makers only because they cut capers. It is impossible to make laughter merely with capers; they must be cut comically. Here and there a laugh can be got in the theatre or music-hall by an instinctive natural effect, and a gift for that may suffice to make a successful actor. But in the cinema that is virtually impossible, for

there it is only possible to show off such natural gifts by care in preparation and intelligence of technique which are not sufficiently appreciated. Instinct may discover points, but they have to be translated into this special language of the screen, the effects reduced to their elements, their range accurately estimated, their exposition set out by careful stages. The imitators of Chaplin succeed to perfection in executing the same tricks as he does, but why do they not provoke the same laughter? Let the scoffers try a few of these 'capers' before the camera lens. They will soon see if one is as good as another. And between the lines of such writers one can read a reproach that the film comedians make millions of money. But do they believe that the people who offer them these sums are making a bad bargain? Whom are the actors cheating? They make this money by raising laughter if they can. A man like Chaplin makes the half of mankind laugh several times a year. Is not that worth a few millions?

~~✱~~ But the public has already made answer enough to the critics. The public is sovereign judge, and I think it is only the public which has the quality to build up these great film reputations. Charlie's reputation is well enough established to

need no justification. It deserves only to be studied and commented upon, for is it not the most convincing proof of the value in film production of supporting extraordinary talent with order and system and hard work?

"Charlie Chaplin, producer and actor, is in my opinion a perfect model for those who, if they want to accomplish anything on the cinema, will have to strive to study and understand him thoroughly. Imitation is merely a proof of inferiority and impotence. Chaplin has a special get-up; he is famous by his own physique and gait; he is a *genre* of his own. Take all that from him if you will; it is only a pointless theft. But to trace the reasons for his success and so to work out the formulas and the numerous guiding lines—that is to learn the business in the best school. I shall be pardoned for speaking of Chaplin with warmth. Before knowing him I was only his warmest admirer. To-day I am his friend."

Thus Max Linder. And we may add to his pages a few which appeared in *Le Ciné pour Tous* a few months later. They are by Miss Elsie Codd, Charlie Chaplin's secretary, who is a kind of purveyor of the truth about the great little man. In

constant and close touch with the comedian, she knows what kind of man he is and has observed better than anyone the exact details of his workmanship. She writes as follows:—

“ ‘ *Dear Charlie,*

‘ *Why don't you give us more films ?* ’

“ That is the gist of a large number of the letters which Charlie Chaplin opens every morning. During the last couple of years he has produced his comedies at the rate of two in twelve months, and his admirers seem to think that something ought to be done about it.

“ When Charlie Chaplin started on his astonishing career his comic films were made with the speed and regularity that comes of working to a time-table. But as he gradually became his own master, and made himself his own author and manager and his own chief interpreter to boot, he changed all that. He knows very clearly that there is nothing more difficult than the art of making really comical films, and the eighteen hundred feet of a Chaplin comedy are the harvest of several months of painstaking labour, and of patient and conscientious study, imposed by the innate artistic sense of this comic genius who finds it so hard to satisfy himself.

“One curious thing about Chaplin is that his hardest work is not his work in front of the camera. It has already been said that he ‘writes’ his own scenarios, the groundwork ideas for the comic scenes, but this should not be taken literally, because he never works with the help of his manuscript. Genius has its own rules, and Chaplin is generally regarded as a manager of a most peculiar kind, his method being to set at naught all the methods usually taken for granted.

“The first inspiration, the keynote for a new film, may often come from some laughable incident which happened in his presence and round which he will build up little by little a whole scenario. Take ‘The Floor-walker’ for example. This was inspired by the spectacle of an enormous gentleman performing an involuntary fall on a moving stairway at a New York station. On the other hand, as in several of his latest pictures, Charlie’s imagination may turn over some particular theme and make that the chief element in his next remedy for the pessimism of our days.

“And certainly if anyone imagines that making a comic film is just a great joke, I should like him to watch Chaplin, day by day, from the time when the scenario enters its period of mental incubation.

Before the great idea comes there is always a long succession of bad-tempered days and troubled nights. His more circumspect friends keep a respectful distance. But, for the sake of more complete isolation, Charlie will frequently go off for some peaceful fishing to Catalina Island for a few days.

“Once his decision is taken, he comes back to his studio, gets his friends together and tells them of his intentions. He invites their own ideas on the subject, some of which he may use as a sort of mental punch-ball, but most of which are at once turned down. But once sure that the idea of the film is approved by his intimates, after going through an elaboration of perhaps a fortnight or perhaps a couple of months, his great concern is now to get it realised.

“And then the technical department begins to hustle. Orders flow in from the management, and every day the carpenters and engineers are working feverishly at the erection of a palace or a public-house, a village, or a poor street or a smart one, as the case requires. Charlie may have given months to pondering the theme, but once he has fixed on it, no delay is tolerated. Lately we saw this well. The requirements of the moment called for the construction of a very complicated street scene, and

Charlie would turn up every morning without fail, feverishly questioning everyone to find out why the whole thing was not yet finished. His attitude is quite pathetic; he seems almost broken-hearted, and gives vent to wails: 'Here am I, all ready to begin—and here I am, held up by some stupid business or other.'

"Now let us glance at Charlie at the scene of action, and observe a day's work.

"At nine o'clock sharp everything and everybody is ready for the fray. The usual members of the company are all dressed and made up as requirements demand, and each one has to be personally inspected by Chaplin himself. He reserves the right to add or cut out as he thinks fit. In some cases a certain arrangement of the characters may be necessary, and then the manager responsible for casting the characters will have to make his plans a day or two beforehand. Sometimes at nine o'clock, and sometimes a little later, Chaplin springs from his automobile, bolts into his own rooms, and shortly reappears in all the glory of the get-up which he has made supreme on the screen. Then he gathers his collaborators, gives them some account of all that they are going to do, and describes in detail the scene that is about to be played.

"Once things have begun, Charlie's transformation is complete. All the preoccupation he may have been under disappears, and to all about him he is like a happy child enjoying some astonishing game of pretending.

"And this frame of mind gets more pronounced. No one could have a group of more loyal and friendly comrades than his collaborators. I remember an old lady—only a 'super'—telling me of the pleasure she and her companions had found in working in company with Mr. Chaplin. 'He is so kind and patient, and above all he's so *different* somehow.' I can well believe it, for on more than one hot Californian day I have been able to watch Charlie Chaplin at work, and I have been amazed at his unflagging spirits. He seemed to make everyone forget how oppressively hot it was and how tired they all really were.

"Once he has made clear in full detail the subject which is being worked upon, Chaplin makes the actors rehearse their parts one by one, having previously tried the business himself. Without exaggeration I think I can say that he has played every character in every one of his comedies. The chatterbox of a woman prattling without pity or reserve, the policeman directing traffic, the ruffian

whom one is always waiting to see come out of the shadow of a door—for all the rôles he first gives the actor his hints, lightly sketched but certain in its details. Then the actor of the part plays it himself, while Charlie accompanies his miming with a continuous commentary of encouragement or criticism or kindly suggestions. ‘Just ever so little more vigour in that fling of the arm, Tom. . . . Yes, that’s it. You’ve got it.’

“And then, speaking to the player of a villain’s part: ‘I don’t want any of the conventional business of the usual cinema traitor. Just get yourself used to the idea that you’re a rascal who isn’t an out-and-out bad one, but simply hasn’t got any moral sense. Don’t put on a savage look. And above all, don’t *act*!’

“‘Don’t *act*!’ How often have I heard Chaplin end up with that recommendation! Surprising as it may seem to an actor, it has meant half of Chaplin’s success in the art of making comic pictures. Sincerity gives the power of conviction, and from that comes the fact that some things which we couldn’t accept from anyone else we take as perfectly natural from Charlie Chaplin.

“When the rehearsals are once finished, Chaplin

devotes all his attention to the camera. He puts his eye to the view-finder and decides from what angle the scene should be taken. Then the two operators get ready : they go on turning until the order is given to stop.

“ A Chaplin film when shown is perhaps 1,800 or 2,400 feet in length. To make this finished article, some 18,000 or 30,000 feet of negative are used, thanks to the methods adopted by Chaplin. The fact is that there is no producer more hard to please or more painstaking than he. I have seen him ‘ shoot ’ one single scene over and over again, half a dozen times, so as to reach the highest possible pitch of perfection.

“ Sometimes he is struck with a sudden new idea when the cameras have finished recording a scene. ‘ Suppose we make him wriggle out and get away while the policeman ’s talking with the other fellow,’ he suggests to the bystanders. ‘ That should make them laugh.’ And in this way the scene is corrected or lengthened, until Chaplin has got clear all that it is possible to extract from this new business. Quite often after a day of five or six hours’ work he has ‘ shot ’ the spool length of a whole comedy. But as a matter of fact he has merely recorded a

certain number of variations on a single theme, which, in their place in the final film, will take up only two or three minutes on the screen.

"The first step in the procedure of elimination comes the morning after the pictures are taken. Before beginning the day's regular work, Chaplin goes to the projection room, and everything that was taken the day before is thrown on the screen before him. He can then take note that the expression of his face was better on reel 39 than on number 37, but that the action towards the end of 37 was livelier than in the corresponding part of 39. And that means that in the final version the end of number 37 will be joined up with the beginning of 39, and that perhaps some detail from number 38 will save this last from total rejection.

"Chaplin himself carries out the building-up process of his films, and the editing of the few captions necessary to a full understanding of the story. He is very economical of captions, for he rightly believes that the public pays to see a film and not to read long explanations of it. The final title of the picture is usually his chief concern. In fact the title that you see on the screen is often the result of a sleepless night or of great mental con-



CHARLIE AT THE BANK



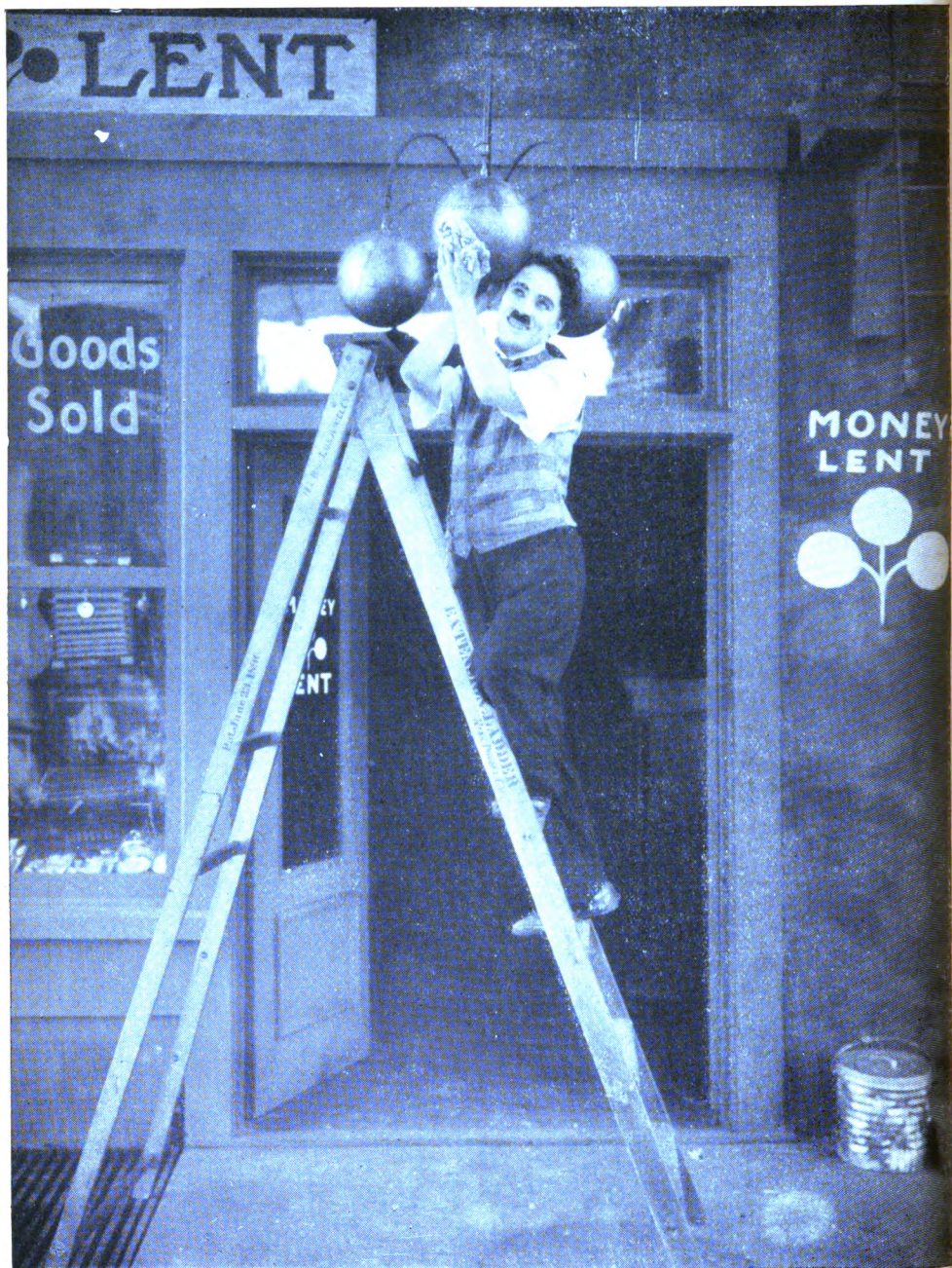
CHARLIE AT THE BANK.



CHARLIE AT THE BANK.



THE PAWN-SHOP



THE PAWN-SHOP

centration, shortly before the final version of the picture is sent for distribution.

“It is one of Chaplin’s customs to have the film shown in public at one of the Los Angeles picture theatres, without any previous advertisement. This method, which is called ‘trying it on the dog,’ enables him to gauge its effect on an unexpectant audience, and to find in what direction the whole may be improved before its delivery to the distributor. Sometimes there is a detail in a scene which misses fire. Charlie notes that, and if possible will improve it with a caption which helps to make it understood. These performances are of great interest, not only as giving the chance of an astonishing insight into the psychology of the cinema public, but also because they show how fully Chaplin understands this public.

“I remember how disappointed he was once about some little scene. ‘I didn’t hear the kids laugh,’ he said, and we knew that, in his judgment at any rate, this particular point had been a failure. Chaplin realises that his world-wide success is in great measure based on the affection of millions of children, and he finds in their spontaneous delight the ultimate proof of success.

D

“ For, to end with his own words, Charlie Chaplin declares: ‘ It is not we personally who are great. It’s only our greatness in our relation with others that *counts*.’ ”

You won’t blame me for insisting on the technical cares of a creative comedian. We shall be talking of them in a number of years still uncounted. I should like to leave you with this impression of astonishment. An actor has everything to do, then? It’s a question only of getting you to laugh, and you don’t see that there’s much to worry about in that. Well, all I can say is that the making of a cinema film in itself is a very complicated task, and the expression of laughter is another *tour de force*. The finished article will perhaps be very agreeable, but the attempt has something paradoxical about it. Think of what one looks for in a little farce of twenty minutes! I have tried to tell you. Chaplin himself says it more simply, or else with more love.

Let him speak for himself, then.

“ Whenever I meet people who ask me to tell them the secret of making this world of mine laugh,” says Charlie, “ I feel ill at ease, and I generally try

to slip away unobserved. There is nothing more mysterious about my comicality on the screen than there is about Harry Lauder's way of getting his public to laugh. You'll find that both of us know a few simple truths about human nature, and we make use of them in our jobs. And when all is said and done, the foundation of all success is only a knowledge of human nature, whether you're a tradesman or an innkeeper, a publisher or an actor.

"Now, for example, what I rely on more than anything else is bringing the public before someone who is in a ridiculous and embarrassing position.

"Thus, the mere fact of a hat being blown away isn't funny in itself. What is, is to see its owner running after it, with his hair blown about and his coat tails flying. A man is walking along the street—that doesn't lend itself to laughter. But placed in a ridiculous and embarrassing position the human being becomes a cause of laughter to his fellow-creatures. Every comic situation is based on that. And comic films had immediate success because most of them showed policemen falling down drain-holes, stumbling into whitewash pails, falling out of carts and put to all kinds of bothersions. Here are people who stand for the dignity of power, and often deeply imbued with this idea,

being made ridiculous and getting laughed at, and the sight of *their* mishaps makes the public want to laugh twice as much as if it were only ordinary citizens undergoing the same transformations.

“And still funnier is the person in a ludicrous position who, in spite of it, refuses to admit that anything out of the ordinary is happening, and is obstinate in preserving his dignity. The best example is given by the drunken man who, though given away by his speech and his walk, wants to convince us that he has not touched a drop. He is much funnier than the frankly merry gentleman who shows his drunkenness as plain as day and laughs because you see it. Drunkenness on the stage is generally slight with a touch of dignity, because producers have learnt that this pretence is funny in itself.

“That is why all my films rest on the idea of getting myself into awkward situations, so as to give me the chance of being desperately serious in my attempts to look like a very normal little gentleman. That is why my chief concern, no matter how painful the position I get myself into, is always to pick up my little cane at once, and put my bowler hat straight, and adjust my necktie—even if I’ve just fallen on my head. I am so sure of this that

I do not try only to get myself into these embarrassing positions, but I count on putting others also into them.

“When I work on this principle I make every effort to economise my means. I mean by this that when one single happening can by itself arouse two separate bursts of laughter, it's better than two separate happenings doing so. In ‘The Adventurer’ I succeeded in placing myself on a balcony where I have to eat an ice with a young lady. On the floor beneath I place a stout, respectable, well-dressed lady, sitting at a table. Then, while eating my ice, I let fall a spoonful which slides down my trousers, and then falls from the balcony down the lady's neck. The first laugh is caused by my own embarrassment, the second, and much the greater, comes from the arrival of the ice on the lady's neck, and she screams and dances about. One single action has been enough, but it has made two people ridiculous and set laughter free twice. ♪

“Simple as this seems, there are two traits of human nature which it throws light on. One is the pleasure taken by the public in seeing richness and luxury in distress; the other is the tendency of the public to feel in itself the same emotions as the actor on the stage or the screen. One of the facts soonest

learned in the theatre is that most people are rather pleased when they see rich folk having the worst time. This comes from the fact that nine out of ten human beings are poor and inwardly jealous of the riches of the tenth. Now if I had made my ice fall down the neck of some poor housewife, there would have been a burst of sympathy instead of laughter for the woman. Moreover, the incident wouldn't have been funny, because the housewife would have no dignity to lose. To let an ice fall down a rich woman's neck is, in the public's opinion, to let her have just what she deserves. Again, in saying that the human being feels again in himself the sensations which he witnesses, I mean that, taking the same example of the ice, when the rich lady shivers, the public shivers with her. The cause of the actor's embarrassment must be something familiar to the crowd, otherwise they will not catch its significance. Knowing that the ice is cold, the public shivers. If one used something which the public does not at once recognise, the effect would be partly lost. On this was based all the throwing about of cream tarts and the like in the early films. Everyone knows how easily these tarts are squashed, and so everyone can appreciate the feelings of the actor who gets one thrown at him.

“Many people have asked me where I got the idea of my particular character. Well, all I can say is that it is a kind of blend of many English types I saw in my London days. When the Keystone Film Company, for whom I made my first pictures, asked me to leave the Karno English music-hall sketch I was playing in, I hesitated, chiefly because I didn't know what sort of comic character I could take up. But after a little I thought of all these little Englishmen I had seen with their little black moustaches, their tight clothes and their bamboo canes, and I fixed on these as my model. The idea of the cane is perhaps my best find. For it is the cane that made me quickest known, and besides, I have elaborated its uses until it has acquired a comic character of its own. Often I find it hooked round someone's leg, or catching him by the shoulder, and so raising a laugh almost without my noticing the act myself. I don't think I quite knew at first how true it is that, for millions of individuals, a walking-stick marks a man as rather a 'swell.' And so when I come shuffling on to the scene with my little cane and my serious air, I give the impression of an attempt at dignity, and that is exactly my object.

“When I made my first film for the Keystone

Company I was twenty-one years old. You wonder what I could know of mankind at that age? Well, remember that I played before the public from the age of fourteen. It seems queer that my first engagement of any importance was with William Gillette, an American actor, in *Sherlock Holmes*, an American play. For fourteen months I played the part of Billy, the office boy, in the run of *Sherlock Holmes* in London. At the end of this engagement I played in variety, sang and danced for a few years, and gave this up to join the Karno pantomime troupe. Pantomime is highly appreciated in England, and, having a bent for the art, I was glad to have a chance of practising it.

“ But I often wonder if I should ever have made a success in pantomime if it had not been for my mother. She was the most astounding mimic I ever saw. She would stay at the window for hours, gazing at the street and reproducing with her hands, eyes and expression all that was going on down there, and never stopped. It was in watching and observing her that I learned, not only to translate emotions with my hands and features, but also to study mankind. Her power of observation had something wonderful about it. One morning she saw Bill Smith come down into the street. ‘ There’s

Bill Smith,' she said. 'He's dragging his feet and his boots aren't cleaned. He seems angry. I'll bet he's had a row with his wife and come away without breakfast. He must have, because he's going into the baker's for a roll.' And sure enough, in the course of the day, I would discover that Bill Smith *had* had a row with his wife. This way of observing people was the most valuable thing my mother could teach me, for it is by this method that I have got to know the things that people find funny. This is why, when I am watching one of my own films at a public performance, I keep one eye on the screen and the other and my two ears on the spectators. I notice what makes them laugh and what does not. If, for example, at several performances, the public does not laugh at some touch which I meant to be funny, I at once set to work to find what was wrong with the idea or its execution, or perhaps with the process of photographing it. And very often I notice a little laugh for some gesture which was not studied, and then I prick up my ears and try to find out why this particular point has made them laugh. In a way, when I go to see one of my films, I am like a tradesman watching what his customers are carrying or buying or doing.

“ And just as I observe the public in a theatre to see what makes it laugh, so I observe it to find ideas for comic scenes. One day I was passing in front of a fire station when the alarm went off. I saw the firemen sliding down the pole, leaping on to the fire engine, dashing headlong to the conflagration. At once a whole series of comic possibilities appeared to me. I saw *myself* in bed, not knowing anything about the alarm. Everyone would get that point, for everyone likes his bed. I saw *myself* sliding down the pole, getting mixed up with the horses, saving the heroine, falling off the engine at a turning, and many other things of that sort. I stored them up in my mind, and later, when I produced ‘The Fireman,’ I used them all. But if I had not observed the fire station that day all these possibilities would not have come to me afterwards.

“ Another time, when I was going up and down a moving stairway in a big store, I began to wonder how I could use that in a film. In the end it became the foundation of ‘The Floor-walker.’ Watching a boxing match I had the idea of ‘Champion Charlie,’ in which I, the little chap, give the big fellow the knock-out—thanks to a horse-shoe hidden in my glove. In another (‘A Dog’s Life’) I used a labour exchange as a leading subject. In short,

I have always profited from everyday life, whether for comic persons or comic things. Once, for instance, I was in a restaurant and suddenly noticed that a certain man, a few yards away, kept on smiling and making signs of greeting, apparently to me. Imagining that he wanted to be friendly, I did likewise. But I had mistaken his intention. A moment later he smiled again. I replied. But he frowned again. I couldn't make out why he alternately smiled and frowned, and I had to turn round to find that he was flirting with a pretty girl who was sitting behind me. My mistake made me laugh, and yet was excusable. And so, when there was a chance some months later in 'The Cure,' I used this incident for one scene.

"Another human trait I often make use of is the general tendency of people to like contrast and surprise in their amusements. It is well known how fond people are of the struggle between good and evil, rich and poor, the lucky and the unlucky, and how they like to laugh and cry, all in a few minutes. For the public, contrast makes for interest, and so I use that constantly. If I am chased by a policeman, I always make him a heavy, clumsy fellow, while I, dodging between his legs, seem as neat as an acrobat. If I am ill-treated, it's always

by some colossal man, so that, by the contrast with my smallness, I get the sympathy of the public, and I try always to draw a contrast between the seriousness of my manner and the ludicrous nature of the incident.

“ Obviously it is lucky for me that I am small and can get these contrasts without difficulty. Everyone knows that the persecuted little individual always has the sympathy of the crowd. Knowing this liking for the weakest, I contrive to emphasise my weakness by working my shoulders, and assuming a pitiable expression, and taking on a frightened air. All that, of course, is the art of pantomime; but if I were a little bigger I should have more trouble in winning sympathy, for I should then have been deemed capable of looking after myself. But as I am, the public, even while laughing at my appearance, really feels for me.

“ Nevertheless, it needs care to bring out this sense of contrast. At the end of one film, for example, I am a farmer. So I thought it might be funny if I were seen in a field, taking a seed from my pocket and planting it by making a hole with my finger. I sent one of my assistants to choose a farm where this scene could take place. He found

one, but I did not use it for the simple reason that it was too small. It would not have succeeded in giving the contrast for this absurd way of planting a single seed at a time. That might be funny enough on a small plot, but applied to a sixty-acre place the action makes great amusement solely by the contrast of my method of planting and the extent of the ground.

“Alongside contrast I put surprise. I do not strive for complete surprise in the general composition of a film, but I force myself to make my personal gestures come in some surprising form. I try always to create the unexpected in a new way. If I feel convinced that the public are expecting me to proceed along the street on foot, I jump into a cab. If I want to attract someone's attention, instead of touching his shoulder or calling him, I pass my cane round his arm and draw him gently towards me. To make the public think I'm going to do what they expect, and then to do just the opposite is a pure pleasure for me. In one of my pictures, 'The Immigrant,' the curtain goes up to show me leaning far over the side of a ship. Only my back is seen, and from the convulsive movements of my shoulders I seem to be in the throes of sea-sickness. If I

were, it would have been a bad fault to show it on the screen. What I really was doing was deliberately deceiving the public, for when I straighten myself I pull up a fish on the end of a line, and then it is seen that instead of being sea-sick I have only been passing the time in fishing. It is a perfect surprise and rouses great laughter.

“ But at the same time there is another danger—the desire to be too funny. At some plays and films the audience laughs so much and so whole-heartedly that they get completely exhausted. To make the spectators die of laughing is an ambition of many an actor, but I prefer to scatter the laughter here and there. Two or three free bursts of laughter are better than a continuous bubbling of amusement or the explosion of your audience for several minutes.

“ I am often asked if all my conceptions are fully realised and whether it is easy to make a funny film. I sometimes wish that people could follow the development of a film right from its first idea until the time when the characters emerge, could take the photographs, edit them and make full use of them. I am often startled by the large amount of spool needed to secure a single realisation. I have turned as much as 60,000 feet of film to get

the 2,000 seen in performance. It would take about twenty hours to throw 60,000 feet on to the screen. And all that amount of spool must be exposed to get twenty minutes of the finished picture.

“Sometimes I take this into account. I may have worked hard on an idea and it has not taken proper form in my mind, and so is not ready for filming : I drop it at once and pass on to another. I think it is wrong to lose time over something which is not going well. One must concentrate all one’s energy on what is in hand, but if after doing one’s best one only gets entangled, then it is best to try something else for a while and come back to the original idea later, if one still believes in its possibilities. I have always worked on those lines.

“In my work I have confidence only in my own power of appreciation. Sometimes my colleagues have been delighted by some scenes while they were being taken, but yet I have turned them down because I did not find them funny enough. This is not because I think I am a much finer spirit than my friends : it is simply because all the blame or credit of the film is going to rest on me alone. I cannot safeguard myself at the beginning of the picture and say, ‘Ladies and gentlemen, I don’t

blame you for not laughing. I didn't think that was funny myself. But my friends thought otherwise, and so I took their opinion.'

"There is another circumstance which makes it difficult for me to accept the judgments of those around me. My photographer and his assistants are so accustomed to my style that they do not laugh at it much. But if I happen to make a slip, then they laugh at me, and, not perhaps noticing the slip, I get the impression that this is a funny effect. I only discovered this one day after asking what the laughter was about at the end of a scene which I did not think at all funny. They told me it was because I had made a mistake, and then I saw how I might have been misled. And now, I am glad to say, they laugh only very rarely at my playing.

"One thing I have to guard against is exaggeration or putting too much reliance on a particular point. I could kill laughter more easily by exaggeration than in any other way. If I overdid my peculiar walk, if I were too brutal in knocking someone over, if I chanced on any excess, it would spoil the film.

"Self-restraint is of the utmost importance, for



THE PAWN-SHOP



SHOULDER ARMS.
"C'est la guerre!"



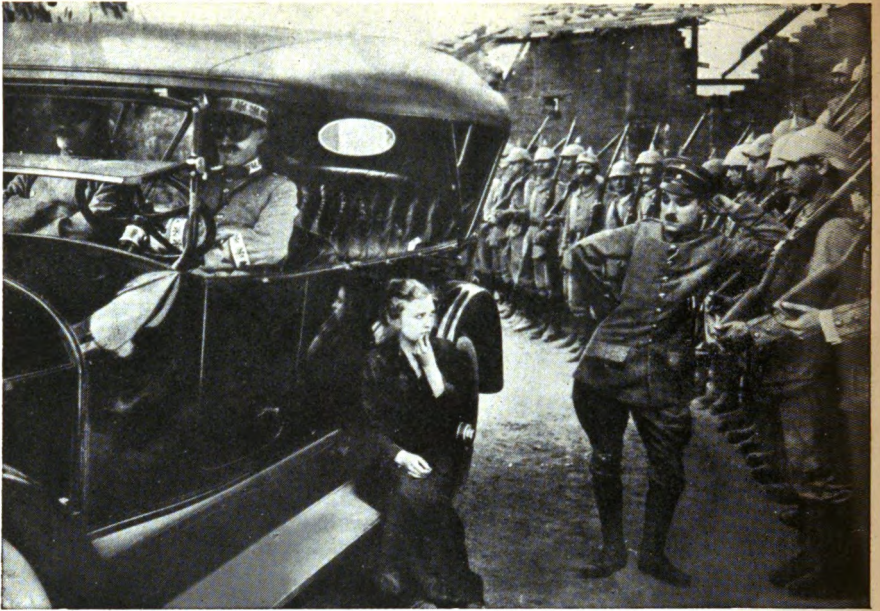
SHOULDER ARMS.
"Death or Glory!"



SHOULDER ARMS
War has its compensations after all."



SHOULDER ARMS.
"Hands up!"



SHOULDER ARMS.



SHOULDER ARMS.

Charlie, disguised as an officer, arrests Syd to save his life.

an actor or for anybody else. To put some curb on one's temperament, appetites, bad habits, or many other things is a necessity. One reason why I dislike my early films is that restraint was difficult in them. One or two custard pies are amusing enough, perhaps, but when the picture depends on nothing but custard pies, it soon becomes a weariness. Perhaps I have not always succeeded owing to my methods, but I do prefer a thousand times to get a laugh by an intelligent act than by anything brutal or banal. There is no mystery in making the public laugh. My whole secret is in keeping my eyes open and my wits wide-awake for everything capable of being used in my films. I have studied human nature because, without knowledge of it, I should have done nothing in my calling. And as I said before, a knowledge of mankind is at the bottom of all success."

VI

THE FILMS

CHARLIE CHAPLIN'S talent is governed by strict method. It is his own method, and consummate in its art and precision. But this method is itself founded on another one, and the starting-point is the science—or the tradition—of the Humpsti-Bumpsties. These music-hall oddities have always been a joy to Paris, a pair of opposites who go through their manoeuvres with bold harmony, and with a mathematical precision as grave as that of the French tragic authors of the seventeenth century. Their madness has both observation and paradox in it. It is a highly flavoured concoction which seems to do violence to your attention, smacks truth in the face, and forces laughter. Sometimes there is only one person on the stage, and then the raciness of the school is felt best. Who can forget Little Tich?

Hardly a week passes but a real variety show

gives us the sight of one of these *baroque*, disciplined performances. In 1914 all the town flocked to see the man—I forget his name—who played a bicycle thief, and he was a humorist on the grand scale. Recently Sam Barton appeared in an identical one-man act, and Grock is the delight of all Parisians.

Charlie Chaplin is head and shoulders above all that. Above, because he will go farther than the others, and won't work all his life long on one single theme of buffoonery. Remembering the development of Max Dearly's talent, one sees what can be expected from Chaplin. If he has time to do all that he has in him to do, this admirable ironist will have an exceptional place in the history of interpretation.

CHARLIE AND THE SAUSAGES

In and about the visible world moves this little man, waddling like a duck that has lost its senses, and mingling, as well as his big feet will allow him, in the everyday life of his time. Among the images that make up the stock of Anglo-Saxon mimicry, what comes better to hand than the bar and sport? So here then is Charlie having a drink, and here he is at a motor race-meeting.

But he has a soul, the little fellow: there are treasures of sentimentality in him which you could only find among the marionettes. That's why, bar or race-track, he is going to find his Mabel. Mabel—his girl, the ideal of simple souls destined to a life of suffering. Chester Conklin, they say, stands for reality. Ideal and reality—that's the whole of Charlie. What a child he is! In fact he's human, a man.

CHARLIE AND THE UMBRELLA

I remember what a scandal there was when this farce appeared. "Bah!" they said. "What vulgarity!"

The country of Molière, it is true, prefers *Le Misanthrope* to *Le Médecin Volant*: and the devil take me if I know who's right. Yet people will not admit that Molière's early pieces are simply off-scourings. They forget all his crude, rascally belching, and his inspired *ordure*. I must say that the Comédie Française manages to interpret away all the tartness of these old sketches. No, no, they don't smell bad any longer, except here and there perhaps a touch of fustiness. But Charlie hasn't come to that. He splashes about over his ankles in rough tomfooleries. A puppet with all his wits.

This music-hall Englishman is a Mark Twain type. Frenchmen who like their Alphonse Allais will understand.

CHARLIE'S MALLET

Something of Daumier in this. The miming clown, with his cooper's weapon, seems to be standing there like a great figure of civil war, a creature of humour—or tragedy. But the portrait comes to life and everything becomes lyrical, or very near it, when Charlie keeps on delivering those little sharp blows with his monumental mallet on fragile skulls and on the foreheads of athletes. *Toc!* and that's the end of one. A kiss will vanquish the male, say the scribes. But try a mallet. *Toc!* and there you are! This solemn mumming is a kind of diagram of prehistoric instincts of which even the present day has not cured us. Just think of that taste for brutality which one has sometimes; it is too fleeting almost, but when it does come its harshness is unmistakable in its clarity. Think of these insufferable chatterers who buttonhole you at the street-corner—or for that matter at the corners of life. Have you not dreamed, screen-gazer, of that neat quick mallet-blow that would automatically dispose of him—*toc?*

CHARLIE AT WORK

A film? No. A piano.

It certainly is pleasing to see Charlie, a nice little thing like a poor donkey, dragging a cart along a terrible hill. But how affecting that could be. No, for us the dizzy episode of moving the piano—when the piano in its turn calmly moves Charlie down a steep slope which ends (the fatality is overpowering) in a deep pool.

CHARLIE'S NIGHT OUT

Spirit !

Spirits !

Super-spirits !

But above all—he mustn't lose his cane and his hat.

For the rest, he'll get out of it somehow—taking for himself the smile that the fat business man means for the little lady, thumping his neighbour on the back just when he is drinking, overturning the waiter's tray with the noblest gesture, juggling with creams and jellies, spending without paying or counting, leaping like a ballerina on the state staircase—isn't that the chief thing? Living the life? Charlie lives two dozen. He lives too much. He frightens one. He hurts. He offers himself to

policemen—offers, but doesn't give. And truly the streets are vast and safe for anyone who trots like a zebra.

CHAMPION CHARLIE

What elegance !

"I am a sportsman. But I know nothing about sport."

And really it is very difficult to organise the game so that the punch-ball shall hit you on the nose every time it has to, so that the gymnast's feet can meet the bosom chosen for them, and so that the Indian clubs crack a sufficient number of picked skulls.

Charlie transposes into a humorous key the traditional series of sporting films dear to the Anglo-Saxon heart.

And his is in truer pitch than the others.

. CHARLIE IN THE PARK

Go and see Chaplin in this short fantasy. It is an early piece, but he is already perfectly *himself*. Watch his features when the pork-seller sits down beside him. You can study there the technique of his finer shades. Study it. He has studied it far more than you.

CHARLIE CHAPLIN

CHARLIE'S NEW JOB

A new job—for Charlie? Not for long.

CHARLIE'S ELOPEMENT

Charlie wants to get married. He is wrong, of course, but this film sees, sees ever so clearly, the nice little bourgeois people. Marrying is nothing, but asking what is called the hand of a girl—there is your drama.

What a tragedy! Frock coat? Yellow gloves? Patent leather boots? Hm! And that first dinner with the future parents-in-law—with the Himalayas or Fujiyama would be nearer it. The apex of the adventure: and so, of course, the macaroni will be more treacherous than the serpents of Laocoon, the wine will burst in the faces of the party, the pie will leap up to the ceiling, the son of the family will put his feet on the cloth and make the most incredible blunders, and the house itself, O Samson, will come crashing upon this trembling tenderness that can never have a to-morrow.

CHARLIE THE TRAMP

When all the luggage you have is a brick in a knotted handkerchief, it would surely be a pity not

to come upon a fair lady in distress. Three ruffians are pestering our peaceful Edna, taking her walk like Little Red Riding Hood. Poor little thing! The brutes grab two or three dollars from her. And Charlie joins the group. His hand wields that paving-stone with elegance.

One. Two. Three.

And the three ruffians are dealt with.

Charlie's emotion makes him sit down on the camp-fire of these braves. Also to run with his trousers on fire across the fields. And his wake of smoke, like a ship's, points the way to the grateful maiden.

The idyll opens on the bank of a stream. It continues at her father's house. And as luck will have it the father is in need of a man. Charlie will be viceroy of the farm.

He waters the fruit trees with a pipette. He collects the eggs from the henhouse in his pockets. He milks the cow by using its tail like a pump-handle. With prods of a fork he puts life into the gentle dreamings of the wage-earners. He overwhelms midnight marauders very agreeably.

And he loves.

Flirtation. . . .

And of course the darling cousin turns up. Edna

falls into the arms of—the cousin. A sad blow for Charlie. Like all the faithless, he doesn't admit infidelity. And he takes up his bundle and takes to the road—where, by the way, they really shouldn't allow those motor-cars.

CHARLIE AT THE BANK

Tragedy changes its style. And if, from Prometheus, stealer of fire from heaven, Marcel L'Herbier has made Monsieur Prévoyan, banker, then here is Orestes, with his manifold torments, become a little man-of-all-jobs in a paradoxical bank. Charlie, broom in hand, is heartbreaking. And there is nothing funnier, is there?

CHARLIE BY THE SEA

Mack Sennett's bathers are summed up in Charlie, the young man with the black bathing drawers who dives and leaps and swims and floats up and shows off and then lies high and dry on the fine screen of the sand.

Throw a little dog into the water, and he learns hell and heaven at the same time. And when he escapes from it he shakes his dripping skin like the ribbons of a fool's bauble. It is charming. The

youth in his tights isn't a dog. He is even more charming. He throws around him splashes of sea water, and liquid fragments of his heart.

SHANGHAIED

The sea is a subject for the camera. So is a ship. So is the ship's bridge. So is all the apparatus of sailing the ship. So is a sailor. So is Charlie as a sailor (only very much more so because he's Charlie).

"Shanghaied," in fact, really is A FILM.

CHARLIE AT THE SHOW

There are two Charlies in the house.

The exquisite of the stalls is one. He changes his fair neighbour as if he were changing his seat. He has a studied man-about-town insolence about him, and he lets the heads of the musicians feel it, and the ladies' shoulders, and the spectacle too. He will end up in the stage box, because after all, in a stage box, one is admirably placed for plucking at a hat in the next-door box, for seeing everything, for being seen, for letting fly a few missiles—and above all a stage box is best if you have to tickle the feet of the Oriental dancer or spoil the tricks

of the conjurer, or, as climax, clamber on to the stage, where a flood of disasters will pour down.

The other Charlie is perched up in the highest gods. His rather doltish gaiety is mixed with the fine jollification of these ladies and gentlemen. By what art or artifice are we made to feel this gallery so far away, so high, so dizzy? We are never shown the whole of the theatre, and yet we *see* it.

And, as final apotheosis of this double farce (worth ten), there comes the sprinkler hose.

POLICE

When do you have a fellow-feeling for a burglar?
When he's caught.

And when do you find him a figure of grandeur?
When he's caught by a lady.

Leave Raffles and Arsène Lupin on one side. Let us take this poor bottle-washer to our hearts, the greenhorn out to make a career of fortune—yes, for all the world as if he were a poet or a plumber or a colonel. But his apprenticeship costs him dear. His chief deserts him. Charlie breaks everything. Enter the lady of the house. Police! Police!

But she is a good soul. She will save Charlie. Alas for her foolishness! She'd far better have let

him fall into the detectives' clutches: for here he is fallen in love. He makes a regretful escape. He loses his heart in the affair. But luckily he can find another at every street-corner. No matter! Time enough to find some way out of these romantic dead-ends, which leave the onlooker with a painful impression of hara-kiri.

CARMEN

He knows too well that the public are going to like this. He is less himself. Here and there he lets himself go. He broadens the parody out into tragedy. The girlish air of Edna Carmen and the pleasing heaviness of Mac Escamillo reassure us. Charlie has a dizzy duel. All the onions, all the hams, all the water-coolers perish before his tin sword. And then he too will perish, since Don José must.

He dies on the margin of the film.

He dies, and that is all.

Two seconds only.

One of these seconds is charming. The other is magnificent.

You have seen Zacconi die? And Giovanni Grasso? And Chaliapin?

Then you have also seen Charlie Chaplin die.

I never want to see any tenor again in the last act of "Carmen."

THE FLOOR-WALKER

Making eyes at the wax figure for trying on gowns, squirting water in the boss's eye, playing havoc with the show of stock, teasing the most serious-minded person of the establishment—these are schoolboys' tricks. What really matters is not to lose sight of that moving staircase, with its unending caterpillar crawl climbing between two balustrades. All the drama is there.

First of all one must learn to use the thing. The best way, of course, is to get on the down-coming stair when you want to go up, and to come down on the rising one, to fall down like the Earl's Court toboggans, and to clamber up with a spurt when no one's expecting it.

In all well-made dramas there are traitors. There is this traitor of a staircase, and there are also the directors of the drapery shop. They are going to up-and-away with the till (in a portmanteau). Charlie gets mixed up in it. The typist plays her part. The crisis is terrible. A lift as prompt as a guillotine juggles the thieves up and down. The

police—the portmanteau—the portmanteau—the police. Charlie slips through the legs of his foes that is through everybody's. Hurried on by levelled revolvers, clenched fists, locked doors, he falls back on a dance (his kindly godmother), and in the subtlest of rhythms he blends the seductive arts of Jacques Dalcroze or Anna Pavlova or Isadore Duncan.

After that there must be an end. Whence the climax of the catastrophe. Flight and running about, confusion, collisions, revolution, siege, pillage—infinity of horror. And all the while the moving staircase is climbing, climbing. And when Charlie is far away in the mazes of the suburbs, that staircase will be flowing rhythmically on, a great river between its unchanging banks.

THE PAWN-SHOP

It doesn't count for much just to possess or touch or set eyes on such a mysterious creature as an alarm clock. The great thing is to know what on earth is inside the thing. How wonderful to keep all these thousand tricks in this sort of musical box! Wheels, springs, screws, discs, keys—what not: there's a whole shop in it. How pleasant to

pluck out the bits one by one—to spread them out on the counter—to weigh them judiciously in your hand—to consider them there with a concentrated attention of eye and brain, like some great engineer. And *then* (oh, decidedly !) to sweep them all up and ram them into their metal case, and get rid of the whole thing like an unpleasant memory or a fruitless love affair. Already Charlie has got something ~~else~~ in his head.

The suspicious little old man has qualms about the goings-on of the candid little young man.

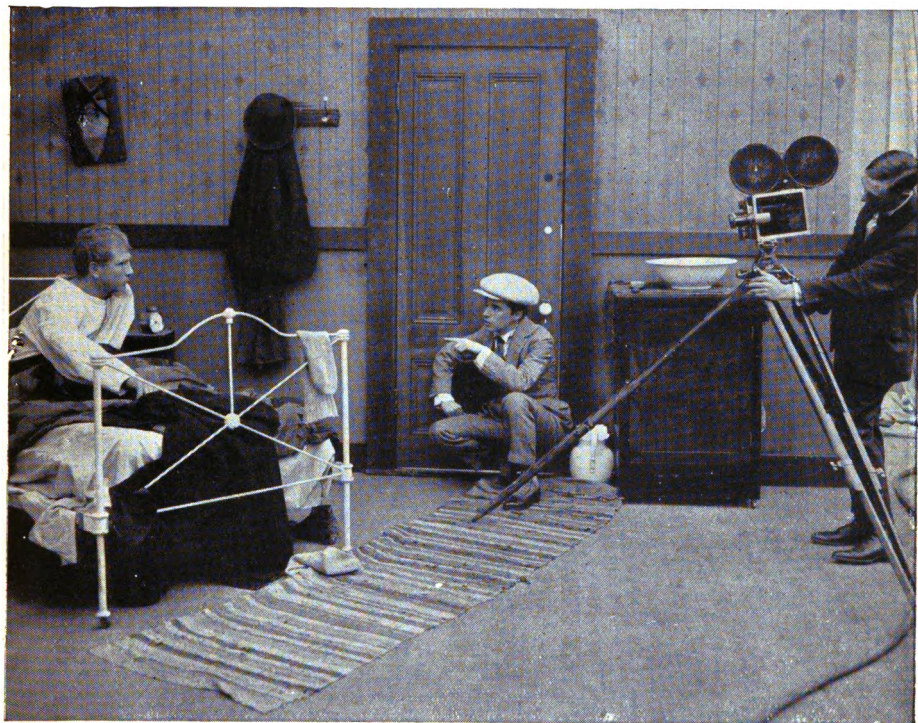
The comedian, vanquished by destiny or by the baseness of his deceiving art, brings tears in the end with a melancholy soliloquy.

There are a few dozen blows and kicks and calamitous projectiles in the back-shop.

But there is also Edna, with her delicious smile, and lo ! the bad lot in despair is transformed to a bad lot in love.

THE VAGABOND

Darius Milhaud has written a half-Brazilian musical score “to accompany any Chaplin film.” Well, it must not be used for this one. “The Vagabond” calls aloud for Chopin. Charlie gives us here a melting romanticism—so much so that, with tail-



CHAPLIN SUPERINTENDING THE PRODUCTION OF "SUNNYSIDE."



RESTING.

A photograph taken during the filming of "The Kid."

coat and motor-car and all, we seem to be seeing some picture of sixty-odd years ago. Charlie, the lover and the fiddler—all the despair of the gipsies—the violent melancholy of the lullaby. And what a stroke of the bow!

ONE A.M.

Charlie's taxi pulls up beside the pavement. What's he stopping for? Something wrong? . . . No, no. A house. What house? My house, Charlie would say, if he weren't in a physical condition where one doesn't say anything. Charlie waits. The slightest little hiccough tells the whole story of his evening without going into any details. Devil knows where he has been. A solemn party (do you think?) where the colonel's wife was so plain and the lawyer such a bore that there was nothing to do but finish up the whisky. Drink then. A restaurant (do you think?) where the dishes pile up while girls on roller-skates whirl around with fixed immovable smiles and transparent tights. Drink—drink. A bar (do you think?) where most open talk has been bandied, glass after glass, with conflicting rhythm. Drink—drink—drink. But the point is that Charlie has been drinking, and the taxi has stopped at his door.

F

The cool evening air in the respectable districts is rather kind to the intoxicated. But what's the good? It doesn't sober you. It doesn't get rid of that way of looking straight in front of you, as if you were an ox or a king from the East. It doesn't get rid of the strange cocktail of gin and ale and brandy that has mixed itself inside you. And then——?

But the chauffeur is getting restless. Got to get out of this wretched cell on wheels. But the handle of the door is as hard to catch hold of as a ferret in a warren. Not to mention the loose change in your pocket! If only you knew where that pocket had got to! Or if there was anything in it! But *that* can't make much difference if you don't think there is a pocket at all. Good-bye, pocket! Good-bye, chauffeur! How one is misunderstood by people! The little fellow is a piece of wonderful flotsam, rather like Moréas and Oscar Wilde, and many another, were on some evenings, feeling too solitary and trying to feel still more solitary, but elsewhere. . . .

The path from the pavement up to the door is an infinity of zigzags and recollections like zigzags. Who was that silly ass leaning on the piano? And

the lady of the house—and that little blonde, sulky and frozen with dignity—her, my goodness! Nothing to laugh at. But gloomy people drive you to gaiety. That's why Bobby dragged us to the downstairs room of that bar. One exchanged pleasantries, there with young things of thirty, and very expert at it, the *ingénues*. What a pity to be so infernally thirsty! No time to think of making love. And someone suggested moving on. A good night for trying somewhere new. The Star Bar smelled of pipes. The Carlton was thunderous with jazz-bands. At the Piccadilly there was a fellow doing imitations of grand ladies, and there was a little woman from the country filled with champagne and laughing and laughing and laughing. Champagne—champagne. The Bar de Luxe was proud of its negroes and its Hawaiian dancing girls, but not of that major whose warm port-wine forced him into distressing attitudes. And then? After that? I don't know. This or that or something or other; it's gone away; here's the door, but there's no key. Here's drama. Anguish. How pleasant it was in the sunlight of those bars. Where *is* that key?

And Charlie gets in through the window. Solemnly he puts his foot in the bowl of goldfish. The key,

the key? One finds the thing without thinking about it—I appeal to men of feeling who have sometimes got home at five in the morning. What's the use of this key? For opening the door. Who wants to open the door? Someone who's outside. Who's outside? Nobody. Well, put somebody outside then. And Charlie walks once more through the goldfish's bowl and out of the window, and here he is on the pavement again. If the taxi were still there he would set out to find a bar, but it isn't a question of that now. The important thing is to open the door. It's done. A man of the world is always a man of the world. And Charlie comes into his house like a plenipotentiary.

The gods intervene. And the gods are block-heads: they never think of anything but plaguing people. It's enough for them to find a nice young man of twenty-six rather full of spirits and noise and night and wanting to rest his poor tired limbs: they set the timbers of fatality crashing grotesquely about his head.

And so, of course, the carpets take to flight on the too well polished floor. (If you wanted to give a dance you couldn't get the servant at any price to polish that floor so well!) The bear-skins stupidly

come to life under innocent feet. The water-jug (heavenly oasis !) is at the far side of the table, and which ever way you turn, the table turns too. Chase a table? That table can't be captured. These brutes of gods are smiting us with vertigo. Will they let me climb now? My dear sir, don't talk to me about climbing Mont Blanc. Charlie's Alpine feats beat all records. And a staircase next! The carpet's gone mad, the rail's a nervous wreck.

But we've *got* to get upstairs. The first time you get to the landing the pendulum of the clocks sweep you back with a great gesture. The second time and the stuffed bear shows you quite the wrong direction. You get up there ten times, and every time you are the victim of evil powers. Poor Charlie, oh, poor Charlie!

And when fate forgets you for a moment and you manage to reach your bedroom, there's the bed in delirium tremens or jerking in a wild clowning epilepsy. It rushes about like a circus donkey. It leaps like a frog. It swings like the drawbridge of some really historic castle. And finally, in a superb apotheosis, it breaks up and crumbles away.

Good-night.

THE RINK

Charlie waltzes the melancholy of a lover. He uses roller skates as others use the "Invitation" of Weber. Watch his glances, his weary droop of the shoulders, and above all his way of flinging his limbs in every direction, which is most affecting. For the overdone drolleries of farces like "The Rink" have here and there some surprising instants of emotion,

BEHIND THE SCREEN

Understand that he is showing you how things should *not* be done—that's to say, how everyone *does* them. He is scarcely using his invention here. He is simply recording with the camera. After all, how could one distort what is already horribly distorted? All the horrors of the studio are seething around him. Perversity of operators—breakdown of properties—dangers of love—reducing the farce to a farce—and of course there are the necessary custard pies to desecrate the archbishop of the historic drama, His Majesty the chief operator, and the Herr Direktor of the stage management.

THE CURE

This is a ballet. Where is Nijinski? Here's Charlie. And here's the blonde girl. And here's the big black beard.

The great advantage of a watering-place hotel is that you can find there, all together, a swing door, a fountain-basin, and a gentleman with his foot in bandages. The clockwork of the ballet does not need to be ticking exactly to time for that bandaged foot to be inevitably wedged in that door; and the door will only release its prey to throw you into the basin. And that goes on. It is perfect. One wonders why it has an end. But have you ever understood why your watch ends by stopping?

EASY STREET

Charlie is roused from his open-air nap by the heavenly voices of the Hope Mission—preaching, harmonium, hymns, all complete. And still in a torpid state he goes inside, to get warm, or to pass the time, or for no reason at all. The stout lady lends him her hymn-book. His other neighbour hands him a baby. The pastor, thin and white and with frock-coat on his body and his soul, talks and

talks and talks. And everyone bawls to the greater glory of God. Heaven and all the angels visit Charlie the vagabond. Hosannah! It's restful here. And boring.

But—but the pastor's daughter turns round. Up to now she has presided over the harmonium and was only a back offered to divine service. And now, lo and behold! it's Edna—with such eyes and such hair and such lips. Charlie has found his road to Damascus. The pastor goes on desperately trying to convert him. Go on talking, go on: it doesn't need any effort not to listen to *him*. Edna smiles. Summits of rapture! theological and human, joys of this life and the life everlasting. And off goes Charlie on a crusade of life. He delivers up to the pastor the collection-box full of pence, which he had appropriated—quite mechanically. He flings himself into the battle. Well, at least he opens the door and goes away.

The pointing finger of the Lord brings him to a police office in need of men. After a few minutes of very natural hesitation, quite comprehensible, he joins up, and here he is decked out in the sacred uniform of the police. The finger of the Lord, with unfailing accuracy in these things, puts him on duty

in Easy Street, a regular cut-throat place, where rules the great ogre who keeps the district in terror. But little Charlie's ruse will get the better of the brute giant—thanks to an alarmingly supple lamp-post. Missiles fly from one window to another; there's a grand chain of murderers whirling about this street of tragedy and hysteria; the regular police don't steer clear of it all. And Charlie triumphs.

And the upshot of it all is that the low street becomes respectable; the notorious public-house makes room for the New Mission; and the great ogre himself, in top-hat and flowered waistcoat, takes his lady to service; the lamp-posts never again suffer from giddiness, and Charlie, with correct and military air, the complete man of the world, offers his arm (yes, he knows which, already) to the buxom Edna, who was, is now, and ever shall be his guardian angel.

THE ADVENTURER

The maddest or the wisest? Which is this one? It is perhaps the most funny. But I should be a phenomenon if I could *know* which was the funniest of the films of Charlie Chaplin.

Charlie escapes! He must have been locked up, then? In the comical pyjama suit of convicts he

rushes on to a beach. Policemen—rocks—two ways out—dive—flight—pursuit. And he saves a girl, and there he is with a lodging. He is dressed as a man of the world. But there is a jealous lover—not to mention a photo of the fugitive in the papers. A ball—refreshments—the police—the staircase—guillotining doors—that balcony from which you can pour water on to the guests—flirtation. And Charlie drops an ice-cream into his gaping trousers. The chase begins again—it never ends—it never will.

I give it up. I ask pardon. I've been trying to *tell* the funniest of Charlie's stories. I shan't do it again.

A DOG'S LIFE

Somewhere round about a piece of waste ground there is always a policeman.

And Charlie is inside the fence.

Poor as a god, and idle as the Queen of Sheba, the vagabond has his own philosophy. His life goes on inside.

The sentimental is only a crumb from this inward feast of the spirit. At least, it can be picked out at leisure. One must love. But whom? A woman?

A parrot? A dinner jacket? A pale ale? No—
a Dog.

Charlie's dog is innocent, but an instrument of fate: like Marion Delorme or Francesca Bertini. It worries the policeman, and collects a crowd of brats, and strikes terror into the souls of serious ladies, and ends up at a coffee stall. As it steals cakes, Charlie is ready to eat them. Eating isn't stealing. Carelessly leaning up against the stall counter, the vagabond makes little snatches. The plate is soon empty. The owner is frenzied. The police has an eye on things. A storm bursts. Whoever is going to pay for all these broken dishes? Neither you nor I nor Charlie. The dishes are broken, and that's all we asked for.

Change of programme.

Now for the *café-concert*. Charlie and his dog land up in a sort of dancing establishment, which could also be called a café or a music-hall or a public-house or a good many other names.

Wildly improbable couples are vigorously curvetting around. Drinks go to the head. The orchestra is in a frenzy! Charlie is bathed in bliss, and the dog—poor dog! But humanity is on the track of this innocent pair. On the narrow stage appears the

melancholy little singer (still another whipped dog); and her solo, tender, and perhaps setting your teeth on edge, weeps itself through till everyone's in tears. Let's weep then. Charlie has a violin instead of a heart; it wails out his unsteady romance within him; and, as the custom is, the lonely man will fall in love with the actress.

This romance restores the text of all the romances of the world.

Afterwards it hardly matters that the dog's tail beats the big drum, that the boss of the place is a scoundrel, that the trombonist has a fit, that enormous ladies amuse themselves by fox-trotting with tiny male creatures, or that Charlie finds himself playing a Punch and Judy show with a ruffian he has knocked out with a bottle.

There is no serious idyll without an elopement. Edna and Charlie and the dog run away. And a new life begins. Worse? Go and see.

This tale is a real film. It might well have the title of Pity.

This story, this film, this *Pietà*, is the first complete work of art the cinema has. It is classical. It EXISTS.

SHOULDER ARMS

In spite of all the people who take literature seriously (and even take only that seriously), I prefer Chaplin's "Shoulder Arms" to Barbusse's *Under Fire*, and to his imitators, and to the *J'Accuse* film. "Shoulder Arms" doesn't bombard anything and doesn't accuse anybody, but it is much more relentless.

The sufferings of the American Sammy doing his training and dreaming of the glorious trenches are explored without any romantic feeling or any preaching. Irony is far stronger than sermonising. And humour is a wonderful thing: it has irony in it, and many other ingredients too. This little cinematographic picture is one of the most truthful that the War inspired in any peace-loving man. The farcical atmosphere of the film, its amusing details and jokes, its scenario on the lines of a sketch, only accentuate the cruel satire of the fantasy. It never declaims, not even against declaiming.

The docility of the wretched private calls down the thunders of the N.C.O. (whence the malicious cruelty of useless parades). And then—"Dismiss!" and Charlie flings himself down on his bed and sleeps like a child. His dream transports him to the French

front. Those barbed early days in the line! The first shell, the first showers of rain, the first enthusiasm to be a hero. The letter which doesn't arrive is an exquisite episode in the manner of "The Vagabond" and "A Dog's Life." Charlie is touching there. And the night in the flooded dug-out is a bold stroke of stage-setting. There you have burlesque taking a completely new guise. It is there that people who have no real sensitiveness will be bored: they will find "nothing very much to laugh at." Dinner and the cigarette, the helmet that won't keep on, the infantry attack, and the patrol where Charlie is camouflaged as a tree-trunk, have all got power. And the gaiety becomes splendid clowning with that delightful adventure when Charlie captures the Kaiser, the Crown Prince and Hindenburg and brings them all back into the American lines.

This film justifies all that one can expect from the cinema.

There we are really in a country which is splendidly illimitable. And moreover we have Chaplin, who by force of his personal genius, is something above the art of the cinema. We should never have dared to hope so much from it.

And shall I astonish Forbes Robertson much by

telling him that Charlie Chaplin is a Shakespearean actor?

SUNNYSIDE

Sunday in the village. The Lord God allows the cooks to go out for a walk, the respectable to rig themselves up in official frock-coats, allows the pastor to do all he can to make people take this useless day seriously, and lets the farm hands escape for an hour from washing dishes and cleaning boots, scrubbing slabs, and getting kicks for their pains.

The nymphs are abroad in the fields. This is an idyll.

All that's needful is to lie down at the foot of a tree and fall asleep. Then—they come and rouse you. They are half nude, with silken veils waving to and fro and slender garlands of artificial roses swinging with the rhythm of their bare limbs. Whatever *is* this young ladies' seminary? What manner of physical culture can this be? Whence come these dancers? Not from the lands of Isadora Duncan or Loie Fuller or the Russian Ballet—not from these. They are nymphs, real nymphs of flesh and blood—but nymphs' flesh and nymphs' blood of course. And you think they are dancing? Let there be no misunderstanding, I beg. They are there: there

they are : and that's all that can be said about them. Besides, it is quite easy to understand that nymphs are nymphs : and then it is all obvious.

As for Charlie . . . but you know "L'Après-midi d'un Faune."

And yet he will have to go back to the village. And he will have to agree that this dream was no more than a dream. And night will have to fall on the village, that all-too-human village. And then everything will have to be rounded and made perfect by Love, and the poor luckless little man will marry his beloved, and will buy a microscopic little farm in the midst of immeasurably wide fields, where, to sow the good seed, he makes little holes with his finger along the tops of the furrows.

THE END



